

Encouragement

2 Corinthians 1:3-5,

"Blessed by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; 4 who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. 5 For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ."

When life is tiring, when we are struggling with our sin, when family members aren't in the body of Christ, when bills aren't paid, when school is difficult, when work is exhausting, when our health is failing, when our loved ones are hurt, when the future is unsure, and when a good friend leaves, it is easy to be discouraged.

Discouragement is a thief. It steals our vitality, our zeal, our joy, our peace, and our contentment. If discouragement dwells long with us, its friends will soon join. Their names are fatigue, hopelessness, despair, self-pity, depression, doubt, and bitterness. Sometimes, discouragement can be so strong that you even don't want to go on living.

Discouragement is dissatisfaction with the past, distaste for the present, and distrust of the future. It is the result of blindness. It is ingratitude for the blessings of yesterday, indifference to the opportunities of today, and insecurity regarding strength for tomorrow. It is unawareness of the presence of God, unconcern for the needs of our fellow man, and unbelief in the promises of His Word.

If we have nothing to rely on, or we forget our blessing and look to our circumstances, then that is when discouragement begins to take hold. Instead, what we need is encouragement. We need hope and peace and the knowledge that the Lord knows our troubles has great concern and compassion for us and is not leaving us unloved or uncared for.

Imitating Christ is the best way to be encouraged. In Him we can have comfort and peace and encouragement. We need to find Him and His words and by faith rest in Him.

Be encouraged because God is a God of mercy and comfort. Verse 3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.

God is called the Father of Mercies.

In the Greek the word, "mercy," is '*oiktirmos*'. It means compassion, pity, mercy. And, it is something that is felt in the heart. In God's very heart, He feels mercy toward you.

He is the author of mercy. His mercy toward you brings salvation, the forgiveness of sins and deliverance from eternal damnation . . . and this because of Jesus, because of His sacrifice, because of His shed blood for us.

God is the God of mercy:

Psalm 86:5, "You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call to you."

The word in Greek for "comfort" is *paraklesis*. It means, exhortation, comfort, and encouragement.

In fact, a form of this word, *parakletos*, is used for the Holy Spirit. That is why the Holy Spirit is called the Comforter in the KJV in

John 14:26: "But the Comforter, [which is] the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

In other translations the word is rendered "Helper."

All this shows us that God is a God of Comfort, of exhortation, and of encouragement.

All comfort comes from God, who is the God of comfort, of mercy, and love.

It isn't an angel, or a cosmic force, a pill, psychotherapy, or a quick and clever slogan that warms your heart and lifts you up. It is God.

We should be encouraged because we can be instruments of comfort to others. Verse 4 " . . . so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."

This glorifies God--to comfort others.

Being used by God makes us feel good--that isn't the only reason to help someone, but it does feel good when the Holy Spirit uses us to do good.

We need to praise God that we have even had afflictions so that we can be able to help others.

How many of us because of a trial have been able to help another better because of that trial?

You see, God does not comfort us to make us comfortable but to make we comforters.

But don't forget, Who suffered first . . .

We should be encouraged because the comfort we receive from God comes through Jesus.

Verse 5. "For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ."

Encouragement is something that belongs to us as a Believer. We do not have to live in a world of hurt and doubt. We don't have to live alone. We don't have to weep in solitude. We have the body of Christ to lift us up. We have the Word of God to teach us. We have the Holy Spirit indwelling in us who warms our lives.

We have the God of encouragement waiting to show us His mercy and love.

But we need to trust. We need to remember the Lord's blessing. We need to depend on Him. We need to keep our eyes on Jesus and Him alone.

Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest," (Matthew 11:28).